



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs  
Summary Meeting Minutes – Revised II  
October 19, 2010**

**I. Call to Order & Introductions:** Bill Gray, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Commission on Veterans Affairs (CVA). Bill asked for all present to please stand for a moment of silence for all of those who have given their lives and those who have been wounded for our country in the different conflicts in which our country has been engaged in and to remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**II. Approval of Minutes:** Mike Subin, Commissioner, moved to approve the September Meeting Summary Minutes. Lorrie Knight-Major, Commissioner, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the September Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes will be online at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva).

**III. Discussion on Veterans Legal Issues and the Court System ~ Dr. Maria D. Llorente, Associate Chief of Staff for Mental Health, VA Hospital; Karen Carrington, Justice Outreach Social Worker, VA Hospital**

Dr. Llorente discussed the Veteran Justice Outreach (VJO) Initiative, which serves to avoid the unnecessary criminalization of mental illness and extended incarceration among Veterans who have been charged with non-violent alcohol or drug related offenses by ensuring that eligible justice-involved Veterans have timely access to VHA mental health and substance abuse services when clinically indicated, and other VA services and benefits as appropriate. She was involved in establishing this initiative in Miami, FL, and is now involved with establishing a program in the DC Metropolitan area. The program in Florida is a success thanks in large part to the feedback and input received from community partners and stakeholders. Dr. Llorente would like to receive feedback from Commissioners and the community regarding the creation of a VJO in the DC Metro area.

Approximately 9% of the incarcerated population in the U. S. is veterans. Many of the crimes they are accused and convicted of are crimes related to substance abuse disorders and mental health conditions. Many have backgrounds or origins related to military service.

The VJO program specifically reaches out to veterans that are newly involved in the justice system prior to conviction and provides a needs assessment to identify mental health, substance abuse, housing, and primary care and medical services. Early intervention prevents re-entry into the justice system as well as abates the vicious cycle of multiple arrests for misdemeanors or substance abuse related crimes. Re-entry services are provided to veterans convicted of crimes and that have spent 12 months or more in prison. The VA conducts a needs assessment with the veteran three to six months prior to their release date.

Karen Carrington's role as a Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist (VJOS) is to be a single point of contact for veteran eligibility and helps veterans navigate the system. There are two critical components when identifying an individual in the prison system as a veteran - identifying that the individual really is a veteran and identifying that the person is eligible for VA services. Veterans with general discharges are eligible for services. Veterans with dishonorable discharges are not eligible for services. Veterans who received a dishonorable discharge can appeal the decision, but it can be a fairly lengthy process. Veterans

can receive services pending the results of the appeal. If they are denied the appeal, the veteran is responsible for the cost of their care.

If veterans do not have a DD-214 Form a VJO worker can assist them with filling out the paperwork and getting them into the system. There is an additional income means component for eligibility of services. The income means test determines whether or not the incarcerated veteran has too much income to qualify for the VJO program. Sharon Hodge, Commissioner, asked why an incarcerated veteran would be subjected to income limits. Dr. Llorente explained that the VA cannot under law provide services to any veteran while they are incarcerated. The penitentiary system is responsible for providing health care, mental health care, and substance abuse services. The VA can only provide a needs assessment for the incarcerated veteran once they leave prison and enter back into civilian life and their benefits are restored. There is a handbook [Incarcerated Veterans Re-entry Guide](#) that explains what the VA can offer in terms of services.

Jackie Ogg, Commissioner, asked if Guard and Reserve members are eligible for services. Dr. Llorente said that they are only eligible if they were deployed and served in combat. Guard and Reserve members can receive VA services free of charge within five years of serving.

Dr. Llorente advises all veterans to keep hard copies of their medical records on file.

#### **IV. Update on Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) ~ Secretary Ed Chow**

Secretary Chow discussed initiatives that MDVA has worked on over the past year. They sponsored the first small business conference attended by 200 veteran-owned businesses and four primes – ARINC, Booz Allen, Lockheed Martin, and Northrop Grumman. The focus was to connect the four primes with the veteran-owned businesses. MDVA is now in the process of planning a Cyber Security conference for veteran-owned businesses.

The MDVA benefits program helps bring an average of \$18.5M in new benefits into the state each year through disability and compensation payments. The amount of veteran benefits has increased by 31%. In the past year MDVA has increased the number of contacts by their service representatives by 38%.

MDVA, in conjunction with the Military Department, is working with faith-based and other-community based organizations to do outreach. The Military Department has deacons serving in 75 churches to reach out to veterans and their families. MDVA is expanding on this endeavor to create an ad hoc committee for different religious leaders of respective communities to guide MDVA on how to incorporate faith based communities into their outreach.

Secretary Chow is forming partnerships with Secretary Laleh, Maryland Department of Aging, and Secretary Cathy Raggio, Maryland Department of Disabilities. Together they hosted a Veterans Rights Symposium for AARP Maryland. The event was aimed at veterans over age 50 years old and provided education and outreach to stem the growing number of compelling stories of armed forces veterans unable to access the rights and benefits they have earned through their service to our country. Symposiums will be held for the other 35 chapters of AARP throughout Maryland.

40%+ of all returning veterans from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) are moving in with their relatives. Given these statistics, MDVA is now working with 11 other State agencies to reach veterans and their families, not only to make them aware of the benefits and services available to veterans, but also to make sure veterans know about the benefits and services available through other State agencies.

Through these various initiatives, Secretary Chow has saved over \$100,000 and is continuing to find ways to save more.

#### **V. Update on Veterans Collaborative ~ Rich Schiffauer, Commissioner**

Health & Human Services and the Veterans Affairs Medical Center are in the process of setting up telemental health services in a County facility. The facility will also be available for Ken Barnum, VA Outreach Social Worker, to process Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) applications. The memorandum of understanding agreement needs to be reviewed by the County Attorney's office.

The first Cost of Freedom Panel Discussion Series held at Montgomery College on June 26<sup>th</sup> is now available for viewing on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JY2ceyIzPaU>. Rich would like to receive feedback regarding the video. He also has copies of the panel discussion on DVD available for distribution. The next panel discussion will focus on women veterans.

nVideo Conferences is hosting a Veterans Extravaganza "Saluting Our Veterans & Their Families" on November 3<sup>rd</sup> at Showplace Arena in Upper Marlboro, MD. Veterans and their families should expect live entertainment, job fair (including on the spot interviews), merchandise and service giveaways (thousands of dollars), a variety of seminars (health, business, home, job training, financial, etc), medical screenings and more. 1,500 veterans registered for the last event. Admission is free. The Commission will have a table at the event. If any Commissioners would like to help staff the table, please contact Rich at 240-777-1724, or e-mail [richard.schiffauer@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:richard.schiffauer@montgomerycountymd.gov).

#### **VI. Chair and Vice Chair Report:**

A program has been drafted for the Veterans Day celebration and Veterans Plaza dedication scheduled for November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010, to be held at the Silver Spring Civic Building (SSCB). This is the first year the Commission has been involved with the planning of a Veterans Day celebration. Susan Hoffman, former Mayor of the City of Rockville, will be the MC. The County will be paying for the wreaths. The program is scheduled to run for an hour and includes the following:

- Invocation by Clayton Old Elk and Aspen Hill Drum and Reverend William Jones, Sr.
- Welcome by Susan Hoffman, Master of Ceremonies
- Color Guard – Bethesda Chevy Chase Composite Squadron
- Parade of Flags
- Native Flag Song by Clayton Old Elk and Aspen Hill Drum
- Narration of the POW/MIA
- Presentation of POW/MIA Flag
- Pledge of Allegiance by Commissioner Jane McCarthy
- Dedication of Veterans Plaza by County Executive Ike Leggett
- Remarks by Councilmember Valerie Ervin
- Remarks by Lee Ann Doerflinger, Mother of Army Spc. Thomas K. Doerflinger, KIA 11/11/04
- Laying of the Wreaths to Honor Veterans (Buffalo Soldiers, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom)

- Moment of Silence for Fallen Soldiers

In addition to the program, Jerry Godwin, Vice Chair, will present awards and Bill Gray, Chair, will make closing remarks. The afternoon will feature workshops and Veteran Services Organizations. A free tribute concert will be held in the evening at 7:00 p.m. with a reception beforehand at 6:00 p.m. The SSCB is working with the Rockville Memorial Library to use the same software they used to display the names of all the fallen heroes from Montgomery County on a television screen during the library renaming ceremony.

Commissioners made suggestions for the program, including moving the moment of silence to the beginning of the program and including the seals for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and United States Public Health Services (USPHS) along with the rest of the uniformed military branches.

Bill Gray and Mauri Hamilton, Commissioner, attended a Pedestrian Safety Task Force meeting to investigate roadside solicitation. The Task Force will be presenting information to the County Executive. Some members want to discontinue roadside solicitation while others want to designate one day a year for individuals to collect roadside donations. The Task Force will meet again on October 27<sup>th</sup> if any Commissioners would like to attend.

#### **VII. Project Updates:**

Bill Gray, Chair, appointed Commissioners Mike Subin, Sharon Hodge, Roland Kauffman, Carl Bedell and Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) liaison Jim Campbell to a subcommittee to discuss the possibility of having a Veterans Court in Montgomery County. Carl was appointed Chair of the subcommittee.

#### **VIII. Updates / Motions for Commission Action:**

Bill Gray brought up the issue of recommending to the County Executive on how to name schools after people who have served in the military. Jerry Godwin, Vice-Chair, made a motion that the Commission recommends that the next County building or facility be named after a fallen soldier from or who had lived in Montgomery County. Mauri seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved.

#### **IX. Roundtable:** None.

**Adjournment:** 7:30pm

#### **Next Full Commission Meeting:**

**\*\*PLEASE NOTE NEW MEETING LOCATION, MEETING TIME & SPECIAL PRESENTATION\*\***  
Tuesday, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00pm at the Rockville Memorial Library, 21 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, MD – 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Meeting Room. At 7:00pm listen to an informative discussion with Everett Alvarez, Jr., the second longest-held POW - Prisoner of War - in American history, spending over eight years in captivity in North Vietnam.

Respectively submitted,  
Carly Clem, OSC  
Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison